Boy Got It Bad

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Boy Got It Bad

by 0trevskies

Summary

He's just so different from everyone else, and he doesn't know what to do with that.

Welcome to the Neighbourhood

The pale haired boy would not stop staring at him. Those rusty eyes felt as heavy on him as the bricks they resembled.

“No need to be shy Will,” his father assured him, large calloused hand petting his curls. Will continued to clutch the heavy khaki of his dad’s pants, hiding most of himself behind the material. “Sorry about this, he’s not too good with strangers.”

The woman before them smiled kindly, though her expression seemed tired. She was lovely to look at, hair put in a soft up-do and dark as his dad’s coffee. She wore a simple white blouse and grey skirt, one of her hands holding the hand of the boy standing next to her. Who would not stop *staring*.

“It’s no trouble. My Hannibal has not been very vocal since the—move.”

Her voice was deep, accented. Not like his daddy or himself, with their rough drawl. More guttural, every syllable decorated with a *hush* sound. Will liked how slow she spoke, much like his father did. They were easier to understand, unlike his fast talking classmates.

“I’m Ezra Graham, and this is my son William.” Ezra shook hands with the mother, and then the son, who only looked at him for a moment before continuing to stare at Will. “It’s a pleasure, and I want you to know that if you ever need anything, just give us a holler. We’re a small town; we take care of each other.”

“Simonetta Lecter, my son is Hannibal VIII.”

Ezra smiled at the boy who was no more than seven.

“That’s a name with weight, something to be proud of.” Hannibal looked away from William, his back straightening and chest puffing up. He nodded. “Your father’s name?” The boy nodded harder, his solemn expression seeming to soften.

Will understood the pride the boy felt. Everyone said that he looked just like his daddy, with the bright blue eyes and brown curls. He hoped to be just as tall and strong as him when he was big, so he could take care of Ezra as he took care of Will now.

“His father is out taking care of paperwork,” Simonetta explained, brushing Hannibal’s bangs away from his forehead with long fingers.

“I’d love to meet him when he has the time. We can all have dinner.” Ezra glanced at his watch. “Sorry to say hi and run, but I have to get to work.”

“It’s no problem, thank you for the welcome.” She fished a piece of paper and pen out of her purse, writing quickly on it. “This is our telephone number. If Will ever needs to be looked after, he is welcome here.”

Ezra took it and scribbled their own number down for Simonetta. “Careful, I might take you up on that offer.” She smiled. He picked Will up, relishing in his sons small arms around his neck. “Want to say goodbye Will?”

Will had hid his face in his father’s neck, the scruff shielding him. He turned his head to wave at the mother and son.

“Bye,” he whispered.

“Goodbye Will, we hope to see you soon,” the mother said, smiling easily.

As Ezra walked away, Will was surprised to see Hannibal wave at him.

He hid his face once again.

Only a few days later, the phone rang at their house. Will looked up worriedly, forgetting about the stuffed rabbit and lamb his dad and him were playing with. Phone calls usually meant work, which meant less time with his daddy.

Ezra got to his feet with a groan from the carpet they’d been playing on, ruffling his son’s hair.

“Graham residence.” There was a pause, before he smiled. This confused Will since clients didn’t normally make daddy smile. “Hello Mr. Lecter, a shame we didn’t get to meet the other day…dinner? Of course, we’d love to…alright see you tonight.” He hung up, bending down to pick Will up, bracing him on his hip. “We’re gonna go eat with the Lecters tonight buddy, how’s that sound?” Will shrugged, holding onto his dad’s plaid shirt tightly. “Something wrong sweet bun?”

Will scrunched up his face.

“The boy…he stares.”

Ezra looked confused before cracking a smile.

“Yeah, Hannibal seemed very interested in you. I think he wants to be your friend.”

“He’s older than me though.” He’d learned on the playground that it wasn’t so good to talk to kids older than you.

“He’s seven, you’re five. How many years is that between you?”

Will frowned in thought, Ezra having to bite his lip to not grin and place kisses all over that soft face.

“Two?”

“Yessir, good job!” He let himself kiss the boys soft curls, making him giggle.

Breaking Bread

The Lecter house was only four houses down from them and around the same size as all the others. It had faded clapboard painted a muted grey, roof with old but sturdy shingle. The flower beds were bare, the door in need of new paint.

Ezra arrived with baked veggies in his hands, and Will by his side, clutching to his leg. He joked to his son often that all of his pants had dent in them at the knee.

Mr. Lecter answered the door, a grown version of Hannibal, with much more severe features and a shadow on his jaw and his eyes. His expression was less guarded though, the sight of the man and his boy seeming to please him.

“Mr. Graham, welcome, and Will, come in please,” he ushered, accent different from his wifes, but just as deep and slow.

The inside was fairly bare, not surprising since they had just moved in, but it was still homely with small touches. Pictures, a few paintings, a rug here or there. Mrs. Lecter greeted them as she walked out of the kitchen, the sounds of cooking still going on behind her. She rubbed her hands on a tea towel.

“Hello Mister Graham, William, it’s good to see you again. Hannibal is just finishing up on dinner.”

Ezra smiled, following when Hannibal the VII guided them to the dining room, where the Grahams could see the pale haired boy on a step stool facing away from them. His back was straight, the knot of an apron resting on the small of his back.

“Hannibal likes to cook?”

Simonetta nodded, looking at her son adoringly. “He loves it. I have been teaching him since he could hold a measuring spoon.” She joined the boy at the stove, watching him as he added the correct spices. Once it was finished, Hannibal gave it one final stir, before his mother took it off the heat and turned the oven off. She poured the soup into a large bowl. She turned to look at their guests, who had taken their seats, Will boosted with a cushion her husband had brought in. He looked uncomfortable, but his father’s presence seemed to calm him.

“William, would you like to put in the sour cream?” she asked.

He startled, large blue eyes staring at her. She could only imagine how those eyes would charm any who looked into them.

Ezra touched his son’s shoulder.

“Go on,” he urged.

Will bit his lip, eyes downcast, before slipping off the chair to walk through the archway to the kitchen. The tile was a cream colour.

Hannibal, who now saw Will after his mother's question, was staring at him again. He stepped down from the stool, allowing the boy to climb onto it himself. It was wooden, and creaked a bit when he stepped up. Simonetta put a bowl of sour cream in front of him, with a large tablespoon.

"Put in two scoops of it, okay?" she instructed gently.

He nodded, doing as she asked. The cream immediately started to separate once it was in the hot soup, the white blending into the orange like clouds at sunset.

Dinner was served, the baked vegetables with the pumpkin soup delightful. Ezra spoke of the town and where to shop for certain things, which shops to avoid as well. Hannibal senior and Simonetta appreciated all of it. The youngest Lecter continued to stare.

Hannibal felt a hand on his arm, looking up into his father's eyes, a less reddish brown than his own.

"Hannibal, mind yourself," he reminded.

The boy, while still so entirely fascinated by Will, minded his father's wish and focused on his meal. Will was glad to have the eyes off him.

"So where did you move from?" Ezra asked, feeling he had rambled about their home here.

A sad look seemed to come over the three faces. Will seemed to draw into himself, and Ezra noticed that quickly enough as his son becoming burdened with the emotions of those around him.

"Europe," Mr. Lecter answered, not shortly, but as if that was all he could say.

Ezra held his sons hand under the table, bringing him back to now. The solemn air could send Will into depression, and he'd rather avoid that.

"Haven't been there myself, heard the fishing is good though" he remarked casually.

Mr. Lecter smiled, latching onto the change in topic.

"You fish?" he asked.

The fathers fell into an easy conversation, and Simonetta leaned over to the children, speaking quietly.

"Why don't you two go draw in the living room," she suggested.

Hannibal smiled at her, picking up his bowl, plate, and utensils to take to the sink. Will hesitated, but with a wink from his father sent his way, he followed suit.

The two boys sat on the carpet, a simple pattern of reds and golds, Hannibal having pulled out crayons and paper to put on the coffee table. Will hesitantly picked up a yellow crayon, seeing that Hannibal was focused on his own paper and not staring at him. He started on his own drawing, the scritch of the wax on the paper relaxing to him.

Sometime later, with the murmur of conversation still coming from the dining room, and the soft tune of a radio having been turned on, Will was taken out of his haze from a soft voice.

“Do you like dogs?”

Will looked up at his drawing companion, surprised. He hadn’t heard the boy speak before, and it sounded as if he didn’t do it often. He barely spoke a whisper. Will liked it better than shouting at least.

“I love dogs,” he responded, looking at his drawing of a yellow lab. The figures of himself and his daddy stood next to it. He looked over to Hannibal’s drawing. Even to his young eyes, the skill that was in the art was obviously more advanced than his own. It looked so real, golden hair and a bright smile leaping off the page. “Who’s that?” he asked.

Hannibal looked at his paper, his eyes radiating grief and the downturn of his mouth making him look so much older than he was. Tears gathered in his brown eyes the same as Will’s did.

“Mischa,” he answered, more broken a sound than he had ever heard.

Will stared at the image, before rubbing his eyes with an arm. A long moment passed between them.

“She looks nice.”

Hannibal jerked his head up, staring at him again. It didn’t feel like earlier though, as if he were being observed and taken apart.

A small smile came upon Hannibal’s lips, wiping his own eyes.

“She was.”

Time Heals Some Wounds

The next few months passed quietly, the humidity of another Louisiana summer rolling in. School was out, which elated Will. It meant more time with his daddy, even if he had to work most days. Sometimes he could tag along and hand him tools, feel like a real helper. In the past, on the jobs that he couldn't join, he would stay with Mister Gregor, a surly older gentleman with no imagination. Now though, he went to the Lecter's.

"Be good little man," Ezra said in a serious voice, before kissing Will all over his face and head.

Will shrieked in giggles, half-heartedly pushing him away.

To Ezra's relief, his boy had become comfortable with the Lecters. While Will was almost always reserved, he smiled and laughed much more now that he had Hannibal as a friend. And didn't they get on like a house on fire! He had compared notes with Simonetta and Hannibal Sr., and the boys acted the same way no matter whose house they were at.

In Ezra's youth, with two rough brothers, playing had been rolling around in the dirt like wolf cubs. His son had never expressed interest in wrestling or play fighting. He liked to play make-believe and draw. Luckily, Hannibal was the same way.

They would spend hours in silence, drawing and colouring as soft music tinkled from the radio. They might also read to each other, which had delighted the parents who had barely heard Hannibal speak in the last six months. Hannibal would read with more finesse, but he was very patient and a good guide, helping Will read any complicated language that stumped him.

Ezra didn't know the whole story, but there had definitely been tutoring of some sort, and he knew the family was at least trilingual, if not more. He and Will spoke French often, and though Cajun was very different than Parisian, the Lecters understood the gist of what they were saying.

"I will," his son responded, trying to imitate a stern voice.

It was a wonder Ezra hadn't smothered Will accidentally to this point. He was so darn cute.

"Thanks for this, I owe y'all dinner," he addressed his fellow adults.

"It is no trouble, Hannibal grows antsy without Will's company," Simonetta lightly teased.

Hannibal didn't look too happy with that statement, but his focus was so intent on Will it was obvious that his politeness alone was keeping him from dragging the younger off to play.

Ezra grinned, ruffling his son's hair.

"Go on now, I'll be back before dinner."

“Bye daddy!” Will called as he turned to join Hannibal, who had finally broken and taken hold of the boy’s hand.

Ezra chuckled, nodding to Simonetta and Hannibal the VII.

“Thank you again.”

“We are friends, it is a gift to have him over,” Mister Lecter assured.

With a few goodbyes, Ezra turned to go back to his truck parked outside, heart light. He had been concerned for his little boy, who had such a hard time making friends. His fear of him being lonely had been steadily leaving him as Will would ask without prompting when they could see the Lecters again.

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Ezra didn’t make it back until well after dark.

“I’m so sorry about this,” he said as a hello when the door opened, the porch light making his face gaunt.

“Ezra your arm!” Hannibal Sr. exclaimed hushed, indicating the boys were nearby.

“I’m alright. Just a cut from some broken metal. Needed a few stitches, that’s why I was late,” he explained, the white bandage stark against his tan hands.

“It was not rusted metal was it?” Simonetta asked worriedly.

“No, it was new and clean thankfully. Doc said it shouldn’t become infected, and I’m up to date on my shots.” Ezra had seen tetanus work it’s horror in person. He made damn sure him and his boy were vaccinated.

“Will was terribly worried, hardly ate any dinner.”

Ezra’s mouth set grimly, following the two into the dark house. They came into the living room, and all the tension, just like that, left him.
Will was asleep, head on Hannibal’s shoulder, face and body slack. Hannibal seemed to have been petting his hair at some point, but now the blonde was also asleep, head lolling against the back of the sofa.

If it wouldn’t wake them up, Ezra would have searched for a camera. While it felt so long ago that Will had been placed into his arms, crying quietly and oh so tiny, it also seemed only yesterday. His son would grow up so fast, eventually become his own man. Ezra wanted to get in as many hugs and kisses as he could before he wasn’t able to anymore.

He walked over, work boots seemingly so loud against the floor, before kneeling. He gently touched Will’s arm, and that light a touch disturbed him, little face twisting before tired eyes opened. His son jumped up when he saw him, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

“Daddy!” he cried, moving to crawl into his father’s arms. Ezra hissed when an elbow made contact with his injured arm. Will stared at it, blue eyes impossibly huge. “You’re hurt?” he asked, breath coming too quickly.

Hannibal had startled awake at Will’s cry, brown eyes fixed on them in worry. For such a solemn boy, his expressions could be very telling.
Ezra picked Will up with his good arm, shhing him as he felt a panic attack coming on in the small body.

“I’m okay sweetheart, just a scrape. I’ll be back to top shape in no time, really,” he said against the boy’s hair.

It took some time, but Will calmed down eventually, though he refused to let go of Ezra. He carried the boy one armed, looking down at Hannibal as he stood up.

“Thank you for taking care of him.”

Hannibal nodded, lips pursed in concern. Ezra squeezed the boys shoulder to reassure him.

With goodbyes and well wishes, he started on the short walk back to their house.

“Did you have fun with Hannibal bud?” he asked.

Will nodded against his father’s throat.

“We read a story about snakes. It was sad.”

“Oh? That’s a shame.”

“Hannibal is sad daddy. Mister and Missus Lecter too.”

Ezra squeezed Will a little tighter. His son had always been sensitive to other’s emotions.

“Do you know why?”

“They lost someone…Mischa.”

“Yes, they did.” Ezra had not wanted to pry into the business of their new friends, but it was obvious that tragedy had befallen them. To move to a different continent because of a family death, there were details that must be too horrible to recall. “They have you now though, and I think that helps them.”

“Really?”

“Of course.”

Will was quiet as they arrived at their dark house. They only turned on the bathroom light to brush teeth, before Ezra tucked him into bed.

“Can we show them the fireflies?” Will asked.

Ezra beamed down at his son, kissing his forehead.

“That’s a great idea.”

Maybe someday they would know what happened to that little family, but for now, they would take it one day at a time.

I Would Just Stand and Stare

Ezra didn't think of the Lecter's as posh or high and mighty, but from how they spoke and held themselves, it was obvious they weren't "common" like he was. He wasn't sure if they would be eager to go trudging through the wilderness. When he asked however, they all seemed excited. Hannibal Sr. had recalled their home with a fond tone, "There was forest for miles, meadows to play in and rivers to fish." That longing was obvious with the small family, and Ezra was happy to bring good memories to them.

Seeing them making their way through the swamp, muck on their pants and hosiery, was an odd but welcome sight. Will walked in the twilight with ease, overalls keeping most of the wet out. Generally he would be holding his daddy's hand when they went firefly looking, but his place had been taken by the young Hannibal. He couldn't feel too sad about it, though he felt a twinge in his heart only a guardian could know.

They came to a clearing with tall grass, the sagging trees of the bayou dark against the teal and orange sky. There was a hum of insects in the air, but it was no worry to them. Ezra had made sure everyone was covered in apple cider vinegar to prevent bites.

"Hannibal, stand here," Will's small voice ordered, standing in front of the taller boy.

Hannibal smiled down at him, a bit amused and very affectionate with his gaze. Ezra stood with Mister and Missus Lecter, crossing his arms as he looked over the marsh.

"You've never seen them right?" he asked softly, feeling as if the dusky atmosphere was not meant for loud sounds.

"No, it is too cold in Lithuania," Simonetta answered, equally hushed.

The name of the country sparked in Ezra's mind, recalling vague information of how the country was fraught with fighting. International information was hard to get this far South, especially for small countries. He wondered if what was happening there had driven them to this little town.

Before he could think too much about it, he heard the younger Hannibal gasp. A few lights had appeared, quickly followed by others, their soft yellow glow illuminating the long blades of grass. They were like stars you could touch, blinking in and out slowly against the dark sky. The smile on Will's face was beatific, watching the fireflies as much as he was watching Hannibal's reaction.

Hannibal the VII and Simonetta seemed just as enthralled, looking around them in wonder. Ezra grinned, looking over at the boys again.

Will had started looking around him as well, the insects flying so close the blues of his eyes looked green. Hannibal was only looking at Will, his ruddy eyes warm and captivated.

Ezra hadn't seen that look often, but enough to recognize it. It was how Mister Briggs looked at Missus Briggs as they sat in front of the general store chatting away, after forty years together. It was how his wife had looked at him. It was how he looked when he first held his baby in his arms.

This look evoked a stomach churning fear in Ezra, but also a butterfly flapping joy.

The boys were small, and had a lot of change coming their way. They might go separate ways, finding new interests and ideas. They might meet people and fall in love and get their hearts broken. Or, that beguiling look would stay. They could grow to understand it. Refuse it. Or accept it.

All Ezra could know was that they would always have this summer, best friends who had had a lot happen to them in their few years, finding happiness in the other. Only time would know how their story would go.

When the fireflies moved on, their lights blinking out like old light bulbs, they started their walk home, speaking animatedly of the light show. By the time they reached their street, the boys had grown tired, Will in Ezra's arms, and surprisingly, Hannibal in his father's. The boy seemed to think he was too grown up for such things, but the way his young face slackened against the man's shoulder took those extra years away.

"See you soon I'm sure," Ezra whispered, the breathing against his neck shallow and metered.

"You couldn't keep these two apart long anyway," Simonetta replied.

Her eyes, a rich brown a bit darker than her son's, spoke of her understanding of what Ezra had seen that evening. They would all be watching closely.

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